

**Minutes of the September Monthly Meeting of Athlone Town Council, which was held in the Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone at 6.00p.m. on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2011.**

**Attendance:**

Mayor: Cllr. A. Shaw

Members: Cllrs. S. Buckley Byrne, M. Cooney, J. Henson, P. Hogan, G. McFadden, K. Moran & A. O'Rourke.

Officers: Mr. Barry Kehoe, Director of Services  
Mr. Hugh O'Reilly, Town Clerk  
Mr. Alan Kelly, Town Engineer  
Ms. Anne McNamara, Assistant Staff Officer

**Position of Town Clerk:**

The Director formally introduced Hugh O'Reilly as the new Town Clerk and the Members welcomed him and wished him well in the post.

**Apology:**

An apology was received from Cllr. K. Molloy who was unable to attend the meeting.

**Minutes:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,

Seconded by Cllr. McFadden and resolved,

“That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the A.G.M. held on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2011”.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hogan,

Seconded by Cllr. O'Rourke and resolved,

“That we hereby adopt and confirm the Minutes of the July Monthly Meeting which was held on July 4<sup>th</sup> 2011”.

**Matters Arising:**

In response to Cllr. Cooney's query the Director advised that the Castle had been split into a number of contracts, some of which have commenced work off-site, while the Main Contract will be awarded in the near future. It is a six-month contract but it is not possible to guarantee that it will finish within that period due to the possibility of unforeseen issues that may arise in this type of project.

### **Disposal of Land:**

It was proposed by Cllr. Cooney,  
Seconded by Cllr. Hogan and resolved,  
“Pursuant to the provision of the Local Government Act 2001, the Housing Act 1966, Section 90 of the Housing Act 1966 and the Landlord and Tenant (Ground Rents) No.2 Act 1978, we hereby approve of the disposal of the fee simple interest in the property as set out in the schedule hereunder:

### **Schedule:**

| <b><u>Description of property</u></b> | <b><u>Name of Purchaser</u></b> | <b><u>Purchase Price</u></b> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 32 Tormey Villas                      | Kieran & Ann O’Connor           | €45.40                       |

### **Additions to Record of Protected Structures:**

Ms. Bernadette Solon, Conservation Architect, Westmeath County Council asked the Members to now approve of the commencement of the process for the addition of 124 structures to the Record of Protected Structures for Athlone Town area. Some Members expressed reservations about ‘Protected Structures’ but following a discussion, there was unanimous agreement that the process could commence.

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,  
Seconded by Cllr. O’Rourke and resolved,  
“Pursuant to the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2010, we hereby approve of the commencement of the process to add 124 structures to the R.P.S. in the Athlone Town Development Plan”.

### **Draft Playground Bye-Laws:**

The Town Clerk circulated Draft Playground Bye-Laws, which will help protect the playgrounds in which the Council has invested substantial monies. He said they could be implemented by staff or Gardaí. The Members welcomed them. Cllr. Cooney asked that they include a notice banning smoking in them and Cllr. Moran asked that a notice be erected informing the public of a number to call in the event of a contact being needed. Cllr. Buckley Byrne asked to include a ban on begging in or around playgrounds and also to state on signs the appropriate age for the playgrounds. The Town Clerk agreed to make these amendments.

It was proposed by Cllr. Moran,  
Seconded by Cllr. Cooney and resolved,  
“Pursuant to the provisions of Part 19 of the Local Government Act 2001, we hereby approve of the commencement of the public consultation process in respect of Draft Playground Bye-laws 2011”.

### **IBAL Report:**

The Members discussed the recent IBAL report and it was agreed to contact the property owners in areas that had been identified as seriously littered sites.

### **Managers Orders:**

The Members noted the summary of Managers Orders as circulated.

### **Questions:**

Question 1. Cllr. K. Moran:  
“Can this Council carry out repairs to the footpath at the entrance to the Hospital?”

**Answer: Yes. Footpath repairs will be carried out at this location in the coming weeks.**

Question 2. Cllr. K. Moran:  
“Can this Council include the footpaths from No.67 Assumption Road up to Auburn Villas in the budget for next year’s works programme?”

**Answer: The footpath at this location will be examined and considered for inclusion in the 2012 Roads programme.**

Question 3. Cllr. A. O’Rourke:  
“When will work commence to extend and develop Burgess Park?”

**Answer: Design work for this project is currently underway and it is proposed to commence construction in late 2011.**

Question 4. Cllr. A. O’Rourke:  
“The new Baylough area road design was to be presented in July, when will it be ready?”

**Answer: Design work is ongoing by Westmeath County Council Road Design section and proposals will be brought before the Athlone Area committee as soon as possible.**

Question 5. Cllr. J. Henson:  
“Can the Council give an update on Community Gardens for Brawney Residents?”

**Answer:** The proposed location of a Community Garden has been agreed with the Residents Association on a vacant site in the development. A lease agreement for completion by the Council and the Residents Association is currently being drafted and should be signed by both parties in the coming weeks.

Question 6. Cllr. J. Henson:  
“Are the works on the Athlone bypass on schedule?”

**Answer:** Yes.

Question 7. Cllr. A. Shaw:  
“Will the Council provide dog control signage in Ashdale to build awareness of the law in relation to loose dogs which are of significant concern to residents on an ongoing basis?”

**Answer:** The Council is not in favour of a proliferation of signage in Housing Estates. However the Council would be prepared to erect one sign at an appropriate location. If residents are prepared to name the owners of the offending dogs we will arrange to have the Dog Warden call on them and advise them of their responsibilities having regard to the Dog Control Act.

Question 8. Cllr. A. Shaw:  
“Will the Council undertake urgent footpath repair work outside 34 Retreat Heights?”

**Answer:** The area will be examined and any urgent works will be completed as soon as possible.

Question 9. Cllr. P. Hogan:  
“When will the speed ramps at St. Anne’s Terrace/St. Paul’s Terrace be provided?”

**Answer:** These works are programmed for the coming weeks.

Question 10. Cllr. P. Hogan:  
“Was the issue of surface water lodging outside No.23 Alverno Drive addressed in the recent road resurfacing as indicated in previous motions and if not that these repairs be carried out as a matter of urgency?”

**Answer: This area will be monitored.**

In response to a supplementary question the Town Engineer advised that all of the budget amount provided for this work was expended but he will re-examine to see if additional urgent repairs are required,

## **Correspondence**

### **Jobs Initiative Smarter Travel Funding Package:**

The Members welcomed a letter from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport granting the Council €80,000 towards the provision of a footway and cycleway from Cornamaddy School to the Department of Education.

### **Grant for Regional Sports Centre:**

The Members noted a letter from the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport announcing the allocation of a grant subject to a maximum of €400,000 for an energy efficiency upgrade and enhanced disabled access at the Sports Centre.

### **Note of thanks:**

The Chairman of the Agri-Show wrote thanking Athlone Town Council for its monitory contribution to the Show.

### **ATM's for Connaught Street:**

A letter from the National Irish Bank informed the Members that they have an ATM at the Branch at Custume Place and they have no proposals to install one in Connaught Street.

### **Legislation against the sextrade:**

It was agreed to circulate a very comprehensive reply from the Minister for Justice and Equality regarding his plans to introduce legislation to criminalise the purchase of sex.

## **Motions:**

Motion (a) Cllr. K. Moran:

“That the Council clean the Town Bridge and provide new solar powered decorative lighting on the parapet walls”.

**Response: The cost of cleaning the town bridge will need to be ascertained and it is likely to be significant as there are particular associated safety issues. The costs for the provision of solar powered lighting can also be examined if the members so wish and a report can be brought back to the members in due course.**

Motion (b) Cllr. K. Moran:

“That this Council discuss why the doors in Canal Banks were never replaced”.

**Response: The Council is not aware that there was ever a proposal to replace the doors at Millbank. Repairs have been and continue to be carried out where necessary.**

Cllr. Hogan said it was agreed 3 years ago to replace these doors and the Town Engineer agreed to cost this work for next years budget.

Motion (c) Cllr. K. Moran:

“That this Council discuss possible improvement for the footpaths on TP O’Connor Street and in particular between Poppy Fields and Bethlehem”.

**Response: The footpath at this location will be examined and any urgent repairs will be completed. Any non urgent works will be costed and considered for inclusion in the 2012 Roads programme.**

Motion (d) Cllr. K. Molloy:

“That this Council call on Westmeath County Council to resurface main road through Church Street”.

**Response: The resurfacing of Church St. in its entirety is considered to be a matter for a larger capital scheme such as the proposed environmental improvement works as part of the one-way traffic system due to the likely costs and traffic disruption involved with such a scheme. In the meantime local resurfacing works will continue to be undertaken as and when required.**

Motion (e) Cllr. A. O’Rourke:

“For this Council to organise and participate in a pre-budget forum inviting our business customers and business representative groups to discuss local authority funding”.

**Response: Funding of the Local Government system is an issue primarily dictated by National Government policy. The existing budget process in the Council provides for the advertisement of the preparation of a draft budget and consideration of this draft by the Members. It is a matter for the Elected Members to represent the views of all stakeholders including business interests in relation to the finalisation of the annual budget.**

Following a brief discussion it was agreed that meetings should be held with the Athlone Chamber and a Deputation from Athlone Chamber could be invited to the November meeting.

Motion (f) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

“That this Council erect signs in our town and outdoor public areas informing people of the sanctions for dog fouling and laws regarding dog control”.

**Response: Dog fouling signage is currently in place in a number of public areas in the town. The Council will arrange to review and extend this signage as budgets allow.**

Motion (g) Cllr. A. O'Rourke:

“For this Council to completely upgrade our Civic Plaza and this general area in 2012”.

**Response: Upgrading of the Civic Square is included in the Athlone Streetscape Improvement project. In the 2011 budget an amount of €150,000 was included for the provision of a new boundary between the Civic Square and the Church or Ireland. The inclusion of all of the Civic Square will be examined in the context of available finance in 2012.**

All the Members supported this Motion and Cllr. Moran asked that a bicycle rack be incorporated in the design.

Motion (h) Cllr. J. Henson:

“That this Council carryout flood defence measures at the rear of St. Kieran's Terrace and Marine View prior to the flooding season”.

**Response: There is no evidence of any particular flooding pattern or history in the Marine View / St. Kieran's Tce areas and there is therefore no funding available to carry out any flood defence works in these areas.**

Cllr. Henson said the flooding was due to a nearby drain being blocked and the Town Engineer agreed to have this drain examined.

Motion (i) Cllr. J. Henson:

“That this Council review its Planning Bye-Laws in relation to gaming and slot machines arcades opening in Athlone”.

**Response:** The licensing of gaming and amusement arcades is primarily a matter for the District Court offices and the Revenue Commissioners. The Local Authority may have an involvement where it adopts a resolution under Part 3 of the Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956. In 1983, Athlone Town Council passed a resolution to facilitate a gaming license application for 3 no premises in Athlone but this resolution was rescinded in 1986. Enforcement is a matter for the Gardai. The introduction of new legislation in this area is currently being considered by the Government. The Local Authority may have an involvement in planning in the event of a change of use.

As the Council's role is now limited to Planning, Cllr. Hogan asked if the current establishment in the Bawn, had Planning Permission and the Director agreed to research this application.

Motion (j) Cllr. J. Henson:

“That this Council write to the Minister for Justice requesting a review of anti-social behaviour laws as they appear to be flawed”.

**Response:** The Council will do so if the Members are in agreement. We may need to identify specific flaws to enable a response from the Minister.

Cllr. Henson was concerned about the lack of parent's responsibility for their children who act anti-socially and the Director undertook to seek legal advice on the issue, before writing to the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Motion (k) Cllr. A. Shaw:

“That this Council place a pedestrian crossing at the Mardyke Street entrance to the Athlone Town Centre due to significant safety concerns for pedestrians caused by heavy traffic flow and no clear road crossing point”.

**Response:** This matter will be referred to the Road Design section for a report but it is considered that it might be most appropriately addressed as part of the proposed environmental improvement works and the one-way traffic system in this area.

Cllr. Shaw requested that the Report be presented to them as soon as possible.

Motion (l) Cllr. A. Shaw:

“That this Council makes safe, steps from The Strand to the side of the Olive Grove restaurant, which are exceptionally slippery and dangerous for use when wet. They urgently need resurfacing and a handrail needs to be installed”.

**Response: These steps will be examined and a cost will be prepared for remedial works which will be put forward for consideration for 2012 budgets.**

Motion (m) Cllr. A. Shaw:

“That this Council provide an up to date report for Members of the current status of all housing estates in the Athlone area that have yet to be taken in charge. Where the estates are being managed by Legal Enforcement in Westmeath County Council, a current update of progress should be provided”.

**Response: Legal & Enforcement section can bring a full report to Members for November meeting if required.**

Motion (n) Cllr. G. McFadden:

“That this Council take Annesfield Woods in charge”.

**Response: There are significant outstanding matters to be addressed in Annesfield Woods in order to bring it up to a standard for taking in charge and these matters are being progressed between the Legal and Enforcement Section of Westmeath County Council and the developer.**

Motion (o) Cllr. G. McFadden:

“Would this Council ensure the retention of the right of way at the back of Bastion Quay Apartments / Deerpark”.

**Response: In order to investigate this matter the Council will need more specific information in relation to ownership and public use of this alleged Right of Way.**

Motion (p) Cllr. G. McFadden:

“Would this Council examine the possibility of re-scheduling the road sweeper to avoid it being on the Westside at morning peak times”.

**Response: The Council’s Suction Sweeper can be re-routed away from busy traffic routes during peak hours. This will however require that these routes be swept during a later time during normal working hours which will also lead to some disruption.**

Motion (q) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That Athlone Town Council allocate monies in the 2012 Budget to provide fencing and general improvements adjacent to Pioneers pitch at the back of St. Patrick’s Terrace”

**Response: A cost for this work will be prepared and presented to the Council in the context of 2012 budgets.**

Motion (r) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That this Council carry out a feasibility study to investigate the possibility of providing an all weather pitch at Wansboro Park”

**Response: While it is technically feasible to provide such a facility, this would not be economically sustainable and would detract from the existing Council facility at the Regional sports centre.**

Cllr. Hogan requested that it be costed anyway, but the Town Engineer advised that the small pitches provided elsewhere, had cost in the regional of €100,000.

Motion (s) Cllr. P. Hogan:

“That this Local Authority provide money to ensure footpath repairs between entrance at Auburn Heights and Retreat Park are finished in the current year”.

**Response: This work will be completed in the current year from the Town Council’s Block Grant as intended.**

Motion (t) Cllr. S. Buckley Byrne:

“That this Council complete the resurfacing of Alverno Drive in full”.

**Response: The budgetary allocation for Alverno Drive for the current year was spent on the works carried out here. The remainder of this road is not considered to be in need of resurfacing.**

The Town Engineer agreed to inspect the road to determine if additional urgent repairs were required.

Motion (u) Cllr. S. Buckley Byrne:

“That this Council move the process of taking in charge the area of Belhavel/Inis Oir across from Golden Island Shopping centre in order to finish this development”.

**Response: There are outstanding matters of compliance with Planning Permission in relation to this development which need to be resolved prior to taking in charge.**

Motion (v) Cllr. S. Buckley Byrne:

“That this Council examine the parking provision for Buses and Coaches in the centre of Athlone”.

**Response: A report on this issue will be brought before a Meeting of the Council in the coming months.**

**All the Members supported this motion and hoped they would have something in place before Christmas. Cllr. Cooney suggested that the one-way system would facilitate buses parking in the Town Centre.**

**This concluded the business of the meeting.**

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